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FACTS ABOUT ESCAMBIA FARMS

United States Department of Agriculture
Farm Security Administration

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OFFICIAL NAME: Escambia Farms.

LOCATION: In northwest Florida, about 11 miles from Baker, Florida, and 20 miles from Crestview, county seat of Okaloosa County. Project Headquarters: Crestview, Florida.

HISTORY OF PROJECT: Approved June 23, 1936, the project was begun by the Resettlement Administration and developed by the Farm Security Administration of the Department of Agriculture. The purchase of 12,915 acres of cut-over land for development into farm units was completed in February, 1938.

PURPOSE OF PROJECT: To promote farm ownership among tenants who could not otherwise buy farms; to give the families residing on the Pensacola Land Utilization project, which is now being converted into forest-land, an opportunity to move to farm land, and to demonstrate the possibilities of developing cut-over land into productive farms.

ECONOMIC PLAN OF OPERATION: This rural community provides individual farms for 81 families. Each farm averages 95 acres of which 55 acres are tillable; has a 4- or 5-room frame house and necessary outbuildings--a barn, smoke house, poultry house and privy. Bored wells give a safe and adequate water supply. Total project area amounts to 12,915 acres of which 40 percent is in forest and pasture land.

Farming provides the only source of income. During the first year of operation, 1938, homesteaders were occupied in doing necessary work on their own units and getting the land ready for cultivation. Full time farming operations will begin this year with the growing of sugar cane, peanuts, corn, and hogs, grazed on peanuts, for cash income. Individual gardens and the raising of poultry and beef will supply the family table. Each homesteader follows a farm and home plan which stresses a live-at-home program and soil improvement practices.

The Cooperative Farms Association, which includes the small, general store, was organized to purchase farm supplies and to sell farm products in volume.

A school building, also serving as a community center, was opened in January, 1939, with an enrollment of 229 children and 9 teachers. The State Department of Education is cooperating in setting up courses in home economics and vocational agriculture. The school is equipped with four model kitchens and a special laboratory.

The school building also houses a clinic, held twice a week by a nearby physician. A survey of children through the seventh grade revealed that 90 percent had hookworm, and a medical care program was begun in April 1939. A resident nurse carries on an educational health program and tends to the health needs of the homesteaders.

Of the 72 families now on the project, 21 already have signed purchase contracts for their farms. Other families are leasing their farms for 3 or 4 years before deciding to buy.

THE HOMESTEADERS: Seventy-two families, white natives of the section, were on the project at the beginning of 1939. Others are to be added later. The selection of these families, which averaged 5.29 persons, was made from those residing on lands purchased by the Government for forestry and recreational preserves and from other tenant farmers in neighboring counties.

Since the decline in recent years of the lumber industry, in which more interest was once shown than in agriculture, the people of this area have tried making a living out of farming the better soil types of cut-over land.

COST OF PROJECT: Total investment in Escambia Farms amounts to \$445,217. Community facilities, including land cost and improvement, buildings and roads, was \$104,217 of the total project cost. Construction cost of houses on the project averaged \$1,627. The average farmstead cost, which includes house construction, outbuildings, water supply, land acquisition and land improvement came to \$3,928. The land was purchased for about \$4.87 an acre.

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June 1, 1939.

